

Public Health Committee

House Bill #6200

AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF LONG-TERM ANTIBIOTICS FOR THE TREATMENT OF LYME DISEASE

I contracted Lyme Disease almost 9 years ago in FL. I was told I didn't have Lyme even though I went ASAP to an ER due to symptoms, and weeks later to see several doctors including an ID specialist and showed ALL of them the bump the tick left after my aunt pulled it off my back. According to these MD's, since I didn't have a "bull's eye rash", had negative blood results for borrelia, and together with the myth that there is no Lyme in FL it was enough for them to dismiss me without further evaluation, not even for other possible different tick-borne co infections.

To make my story short, I went to a doctor familiar with Lyme since her son has it, and did more testing. I was diagnosed not only with Lyme, but also with ehrlichia, (another infection transmitted by the tick) since my blood work was highly positive for this particular co infection. In some cases, ehrlichiosis can be fatal. And here is where my story started.

I DON'T LIKE TO TAKE ANTIBIOTICS or medications, to be honest with you: I HATE THEM !!!!

However, I have duties as a wife, a mother of two beautiful girls, and also as a community member, so I MUST take antibiotics to function and comply with my activities. I NEED them like patients with AIDS need long term use of antiviral drugs for their HIV virus. Chronic Lyme disease is a persistent infection that affects the central nervous system besides joints and muscles. So, we need open end treatment with antibiotics to control our relentless infection. There are several studies showing the persistence of the Lyme spirochete in patients after antibiotics.

Every time I try to stop antibiotics it is only a matter of weeks or several months for me to come down with the symptoms again. You see, the Lyme spirochetes have the ability to shift into a cystic form so when antibiotics are stopped, cysts open and new spirochetes emerge. This polymorphic behavior has been well documented. Now add to this borrelia infection other tick borne infections. For instance, like in my case, Babesia, which is a red blood parasite that causes anemia and thickening of the blood among other symptoms. Several studies also show that this malaria-like protozoa can persist specially in those with compromised immune systems like mine, after adequate therapy. Since my tick had "the works" besides infecting me with borrelia burgdorferi, ehrlichia and babesia I was later diagnosed with bartonella, the infectious agent of Cat Scratch disease. I didn't know how dirty the tick saliva was. And of course, I need various different antibiotics for different infections. The antibiotic that targets the spirochete does not target the bartonella or the babesia. So, combinations of antibiotics on and off, according to the symptoms, is what has worked for me.

NOW, I've become educated and disciplined not only by taking my medications, but also with my diet and exercise program, hoping to boost my immune system and extend antibiotic free periods. Or who knows? Perhaps even to stop antibiotics for the rest of my life. Unfortunately, until this miracle occurs, I have to continue my journey to perfect health and keep taking my antibiotics.

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